DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 498 IR 005 820

AUTHOR Rutherford, Janette
TITLE The Role of the Elderly Adult in Recent Young Adult Fiction.
PUB DATE May 78
NOTE 32p.; Master's Thesis, Texas Woman's University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Literature; Bibliographies; *Book Reviews; Fiction; *Interpersonal Relationship; Masters Theses; Older Adults; *Role Perception; Self Actualization

ABSTRACT

Selected recent adolescent novels which center on a young adult's relationship with an older adult are analyzed. In these novels which feature older adults and young adults as main characters, the older character has qualities that the teenager examines, then accepts or rejects. In today's nuclear family, teenagers sometimes have very little opportunity to be well acquainted with older individuals. By depicting an elderly person's values and philosophies, these realistic novels can enhance a young adult's personal development and give him a new awareness, an interest or empathy for another human being. (Author/JAB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED157498

THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY ADULT IN RECENT YOUNG ADULT FICTION

A PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF

LIBRARY SCIENCE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John J. Miniter

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

BY

JANETTE RUTHERFORD, B.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 1978

IR005820

The Graduate School

Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

May 1978

We hereby recommend that the paper prepared under our supervision by Janette Rutherford entitled "The Role of the Elderly Adult in Recent Young Adult Fiction"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Library Science

Committee:

Chairman

Accepted:

Dean of The Graduate School

PREFACE

This paper was submitted to fulfill partial requirements for the course, "Literature for Young People," Library Science 5623, Spring Term, 1977, Hazel Furman, assistant professor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE iii

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY ADULT IN RECENT YOUNG ADULT FICTION 5

III. CONCLUSION 23

APPENDIX 25

BIBLIOGRAPHY 26

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the most recent trends in literature for the adolescent is the realistic novel. In realism, an author:

> . . . tries to evoke through his use of words the feelings and emotions, the triumphs and failures, the tensions and releases, that people in the age group of twelve to twenty normally experience.[1]

Unique among various realistic experiences portrayed in young adult novels is a teenager's relationship with an elderly adult who has a significant influence on the teenager's maturation.

In order to analyze realistic fiction for young adults, a librarian must base selections on an authority. For that reason, each of the books discussed were analyzed using Robert J. Havighurst's developmental tasks, which state that before a human being can progress from one stage of growth and development to another he must

---

[1]G. Robert Carlsen, Books and the Teen-Age Reader rev. and updtd. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967; Bantam Books, 1971), p. 41.

successfully complete certain tasks. The tasks for adolescents according to Havighurst are:

1. Achieving new and more natural relations with agemates of both sexes
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine social role
3. Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively
4. Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults
5. Preparing for marriage and family life
6. Preparing for an economic career
7. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior--developing an ideology
8. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior[1]

On the premise that the young adults in the novels are aided in their development by the association with the elder adult, what does the older individual have to gain from nurturing such a relationship? According to Havighurst, the elder adult also has tasks and needs; therefore, the relationship with a young adult is reciprocal. The tasks for later maturity are:

1. Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health
2. Adjustment to retirement and reduced income
3. Adjusting to death of spouse
4. Establishing an explicit affiliation with one's age group
5. Adopting and adapting social roles in a flexible way

---

[1]Robert J. Havighurst, Developmental Tasks and Education, 3rd ed. (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 45-75.

6. Establishing satisfactory physical living arrangements[1]

The scope and purpose of this paper is to analyze selected recent adolescent novels which center on a young adult's relationship with an older adult. These novels were chosen because they depict a variety of experiences, traumatic as well as wholesome. Each older character has qualities that the teenager examines, then accepts or rejects. The teenager's maturation is the direct result of his relationship with the older person. This paper will not treat death; it strikes the infant, the teenager, the young parent as well as the old. Nor will it examine the process of aging, just the personality and character of this stage of life as it can affect the young adult's development. In addition to those titles that are discussed, a list of similar books that also meet these tasks will be found in the Appendix.

The scope of this paper is confined to those relatively few novels which feature older adults and young adults as main characters. Furthermore, little has been written in professional literature on this relationship; it is treated as just one more form of realism. The novels chosen are directed toward adolescents aged

---

[1]Ibid., pp. 108-113.

twelve to eighteen. According to Robert Carlsen in Books and the Teen-Age Reader, adolescents' reading and interest levels fall into three diverse categories. The reading levels are based on chronological age; the interest levels are based on maturity and experience and usually coincide with the reading levels. Early adolescent readers are able to comprehend material geared to ages twelve to fourteen and are interested in novels featuring sport stories, animal stories, adventure, mystery, and other genres. Middle adolescents are generally aged fifteen and read romance, nonfiction adventure, historical fiction, adolescent life, and other themes. The most sophisticated and skilled reader is the late adolescent who usually has established his adult reading habits and reads popular adult fiction, nonfiction, and the classics. In general, though, an individual adolescent may range from one level to another in his reading, depending upon his interests.[1]

---

[1]Carlsen, Teen-Age Reader, pp. 23-30.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY ADULT IN RECENT YOUNG ADULT FICTION

In our society, older people are considered a social problem; we place the loss of youth above the acquisition of wisdom and experience. There is a need to examine our stereotypes of the elderly, to change our attitudes toward aging, and to bring a perspective to a natural stage of life. Therefore, the librarian as an informed public servant must be concerned that novels depicting this age group do so with dignity and respect.

What can presenting the elderly, their lives and philosophies contribute to adolescent development? Probably without realizing it, teenagers and older adults have a great deal in common. If they live with their families, they are not usually included in major family decisions; the family may think the teenager is too young to know anything, that the older person never had that problem back in his day. Both constantly seek assurance that they are loved, yet battle for their independence. They sometimes have money and employment problems. Their

bodies are changing physically. Both can be too sentimental as well as too critical. The death of a loved one can shake their foundations. So, it is hoped that using the elderly person in young adult novels will make the adolescent reader more aware of his world and his responsibility toward the aged and his adjustment to his own aging.

Adolescent novels about the relationships of teenagers and the elderly should capture the essence of what it is to be a teenager, what it is to be an elderly adult. Two novels comparable in character development, theme, and purpose are John Donovan's Remove Protective Coating a Little at a Time and Barbara Wersba's The Dream Watcher. Both stories are built on lonely boys who have unloving, unsatisfactory parents and on lonely old women full of worldly wisdom and experience.

In Remove Protective Coating a Little at a Time, Harry's parents are young; his mother resents having no life of her own and eventually goes to a sanitarium. His ambitious father communicates with him better, but his job takes him away. So, when Harry accidentally meets Amelia in the park, a friendship develops, in spite of their age differences. Amelia is an independent, outspoken old lady who sets up a series of tests for Harry to pass; otherwise,

there will be no friendship. Amelia, a small time con artist who lives in a condemned building and traps pigeons for her dinner, is the first adult to challenge Harry.

Within the relationship Harry begins to examine himself; he starts taking care of Amelia, bringing her food, blankets, and other necessities. As he makes her a sounding board for his personal problems, Harry begins to gain a better perspective of his parents and their failing marriage; in doing so, he slowly learns to accept himself and to discover his value patterns. In coming to terms with himself, he begins to fail Amelia's tests, because her con game repulses him:

> "'I've seen how you con people out of money, Amelia,' Harry said. 'What do you do with it? Tuck it away somewhere where nobody will find it? You'd rather freeze in this dump than spend money?'
> 'I never con people out of money. I tell little stories to people and it makes them happy to give up a few dollars. That is not conning.'
> 'That's conning.'
> 'You spy on me. That's worse.'
> 'I wasn't spying. I happened to be on Sixth Avenue a few weeks ago, and I saw how you operated.'
> 'I get a little. Just enough.'"[1]

Amelia justifies herself, but both know the friendship is finished. Then, one day Harry discovers

---

[1]John Donovan, Remove Protective Coating a Little at a Time (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), p. 82.

that the condemned building has been torn down; Amelia has just disappeared.

A relationship similar to Harry and Amelia's is that of Albert Scully and Mrs. Woodfin in The Dream Watcher. Albert Scully is a problem to himself as well as to his parents and the school. Everyone, including Albert, thinks he is a failure; his only redeeming quality is his love of literature. When he finally meets Mrs. Woodfin, they discuss what he has read, and they read together. For the first time, Albert's opinion is respected; he begins to accept himself.

When Mrs. Woodfin dies, Albert discovers that she had lied to him; in truth, she was just a literature teacher who was fired for drinking, not the actress who had given up her career for the man she loved. He is shattered, but begins to reflect on the friendship:

> . . . I saw that Mrs. Woodfin had been special. It didn't matter that she had lied about herself because she was a lonely old woman who needed friends. What mattered was that she had made me feel different--and because of that, I had seen myself as a person for the first time in my life. Somebody called Albert Scully, who could be the biggest freak in the universe, but who would still be somebody. Mrs. Woodfin's life had been sad, and yet she had made poetry out of it . . . She had believed the right things about what was good and beautiful--and so I had believed them, too. That was the point, the whole point, and

it made Mrs. Woodfin special. Because she had given this thing to me . . .[1]

Even though both novels end with loss and sadness, the relationships satisfied needs of both age groups. The lonely women had someone to care for them; the boys had acceptance as individuals.

In The Pigman, Paul Zindel creates a very different, but realistic story around two confused and frustrated teenagers and a lonely old man. From the beginning the reader senses a tragedy.

John and Lorraine are intelligent, but idle. They do not have satisfying relationships with their parents; they just have each other. So, for lack of anything better to do, they resort to playing telephone tricks; old Mr. Pignati, whose family is dead, becomes one of their victims. Out of curiosity and pity, John and Lorraine keep visiting him, and they nickname him the Pigman. He enjoys their company and attention, and he opens his home to them. One day while roller skating with John, Mr. Pignati has a heart attack.

While Mr. Pignati is in the hospital John and Lorraine have free run of his home. One of their games

---

[1]Barbara Wersba, The Dream Watcher (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 170.

turns into a destructive rampage. When Mr. Pignati finds some of his treasures destroyed, he loses trust and confidence in his young friends. John and Lorraine finally learn they are responsible for their actions.

This book presents a negative picture--examples of unthinking, idle teenagers. But because John and Lorraine are writing the story in retrospect, the reader understands that their relationship, destructive as it was, brought them face to face with themselves. They have learned the morals of cultivating friendships, and they have learned respect for individuals and personal property.

In Lynn Hall's The Siege of Silent Henry, young Robert Short has high ambition; much of his life plan, as with many teenagers, is centered around money and obtaining it. Robert has decided he will have saved $10,000 by the time he finishes college, and he even has a lucrative chinchilla business in his parent's basement. Yet he has not learned to handle himself as a businessman; he ruthlessly sets out to take away another man's livelihood. In this book, the developmental task of preparing for an economic career is portrayed well, and a young reader can observe the maturation of a young businessman.

When Robert was a little boy he and two girls entertained themselves pestering old Silent Henry and

following him trying to find the location of Henry's valuable ginseng beds. Now, Robert's life plan has excluded the girls, and he focuses on Henry and the ginseng. Robert knows the old man has few friends, so he schemes to ingratiate himself to the old man, learn the locations of the ginseng, and harvest the beds himself.

What Robert does not realize is that old Henry is shrewd and knows Robert's intentions. Both of them do not know they have mutual needs for friendship. They come to know each other and have some common interests. The only time the friendship is strained is when the ginseng is mentioned. When Robert makes his play for the location of the beds, he and Henry have words. Later, as he thinks about the spat, Robert faces the truth about himself:

> . . . Could the old boy be so hard up for companionship that he was willing to have me around, to have the fake kind of friendship I was offering him, rather than none at all?
>
> The clock moved on, in tiny minute-sized spasms. Robert's growing instinct for understanding the motives of others, the instinct that was so valuable in manipulating teachers and parents, told him that this last idea was probably the truth, or close to the truth. The dawning of this understanding brought with it a weight, the bothersome but somehow warming burden of responsibility for Henry's feelings.
>
> Robert shook his head slowly as his thoughts moved on. Boy, he must have really hurt when he realized I wasn't just hanging around because I liked him. That I was trying to get something out of him.

> He was shaken by the knowledge that he, Robert Short, actually had the power to hurt another human being, not by any act of deliberate cruelty but simply by being the kind of person he was. It was an unpleasant realization.[1]

From his experiences with Henry, Robert is acquiring a set of values, and he is learning socially responsible behavior, and exactly the meaning of friendship. Furthermore, his experiences are making him aware of his relations with his agemates.

> He saw Amber Showalter in her old jeans, beating rag rugs on the footbridge this morning. By a tremendous concentration of his will, he put himself in her position as she stood there, homely and Saturday-morning messy, while the one person in her world she longed to impress drove by and saw her. Robert felt a pang of compassion.[2]

Robert is not a terrible person; he just had a lot to learn about friendship and more about the business world. His parents were not adequate for teaching him, and his few friends felt alienated. But it is his relationship with old Henry that teaches him a new philosophy.

Another book exemplary of learning socially responsible behavior and preparing for the business world

---

[1]Lynn Hall, The Siege of Silent Henry (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1972), p. 118.

[2]Ibid., p. 119.

is Frank Bonham's Hey, Big Spender!. This is a novel about an old black man called the Breathing Man and his young friend Cool. The Breathing Man has just inherited half a million dollars and wants Cool to distribute portions to needy people. Cool soon learns the business he tries to operate is futile; there are too many needy people and just as many swindlers. Besides, he must continually guard the identity of the benefactor, defend himself against angry people who did not get money, and run from a motorcycle gang. Cool realizes the Breathing Man has a lot of faith in him and does not want to disappoint the old man, but he can not continue the job. Then, their problem is resolved when Cool's aunt, who has several foster children, suggests they fund children's foster homes. The book ends with the reader knowing Cool is now able to handle the operations of the homes because of his experiences.

In Wilson Rawls' Summer of the Monkeys fourteen year old Jay Berry and his Grandpa decide to trap circus monkeys that had escaped from a wrecked train. Motivating Jay Berry is a $156.00 reward that he will use to buy a pony and a .22 rifle that he has wanted since the day he was born! Throughout the novel the reader understands this is truly a family story with Jay Berry's parents,

grandparents, and his twin sister, crippled since birth, supporting him in all his trapping adventures. Because Jay Berry can visualize himself with a pony and a .22 he endures many humiliating bouts trying to trap the monkeys. He and his Grandpa become so obsessed with catching the monkeys that they take the wagon to town to the library for a book on trapping monkeys. It is on this trip that Jay Berry says to his Grandpa:

> "'Grandpa, we sure have a lot of fun together, don't we?'
> Grandpa smiled and said, 'We surely do. You know, an old man like me can teach a young boy like you all the good things in life. But it takes a young boy like you to teach an old man like me to appreciate all the good things in life. I guess that's what life's all about.'"[1]

All of Jay Berry's traps and techniques do not catch the monkeys; yet after a terrible storm, they just seem to give up and want to be caught. It is then that Jay Berry's wish to have a pony and a .22 could come true. But after a long talk with his Grandpa, Jay Berry decides to help his sister.

> "'I can't buy a pony, Grandpa,' I said. 'If I do, I'd always feel guilty. Every time I climbed on its back to go riding, I'd think of my little sister and that old crippled leg of hers. I'm

---

[1]Wilson Rawls, Summer of the Monkeys (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 154.

> going to give my money to her so she can go to the hospital and get it fixed up.'
>
> 'I think you were trying to tell me that all the time. That's why you brought the crippled mare home with you, so I could see it and maybe it would wake me up. But I was so blind I couldn't see anything but the pony.'
>
> Not saying a word, Grandpa ran his hand down in his pocket, pulled out the money I had given him, and handed it to me.
>
> In a voice that quivered with emotion, he said, 'Son, I've always been proud of you, but right now, no grandpa on this earth could be as proud as I am--'"[1]

This is another example of a young adult learning to manage money, and Jay Berry's grandfather's influence on him is undeniable. In sacrificing his desire for a pony and a .22 for his sister's operation, Jay Berry realizes he has made a decision he will not regret.

Several of the books examined delve into the relationships of girls to their grandparents. The girls are special to their grandparents, above the other grandchildren. The grandparents are significant in the girls' lives because their parents are not satisfactory examples.

Norma Fox Mazer's book, A Figure of Speech, is a realistic story of a young girl and her Grandpa. Grandpa is eighty-three, active, and lives with his son's family. When his wife died, he felt lonely and lost, but with the birth of Jenny, an unwanted child, he had someone to love

---

[1]Ibid., p. 220.

and protect again. As Jenny grew older, their dependence grew, much to the resentment of her parents.

Throughout the book, Jenny is pitted against her parents because of Grandpa. Jenny is the protector now, and when she discovers that her new sister-in-law wants Grandpa's basement apartment, she bristles. But after he causes a fire, her parents force Grandpa out to share a bedroom with a grandson; they sell many of his belongings and begin to look for a nursing home. To avoid losing her Grandpa, Jenny runs away with him to his boyhood home. Grandpa, sick and confused since the fire, dies.

This sad, but inevitable loss of her Grandpa, caused Jenny to examine her role within the family unit, and she finds a strength, a determination to assert herself, to finally be noticed. Young as she is though, she is emotionally independent from her parents and is developing an ethical system for her life.

A brighter picture of granddaughter-grandparents relationship is in Mary Stolz's Leap Before You Look. Besides having the usual growing up problems, Jimmie is faced with her parents' failing marriage. Her mother is educated, but lazy and uncaring; her father, a successful dentist, loves Jimmie, but they can not talk. Thus,

Jimmie has to rely on her grandmothers for satisfying her needs.

Jimmie's grandmothers are pictures of typical, but opposite, old women. As such, they verge on being stereotypes. Grandmother Prior, her maternal grandmother, is wealthy, cold, and fearful of aging, covering the barrenness of her life with the purchases of her wealth and social formalities. Jimmie respects Grandmother Prior, but she dislikes her life-style. On the other hand, Gram has accepted her stage in life, loves being a grandmother. Jimmie feels very close to Gram and describes her as:

> . . . just straightforwardly herself, and herself was, to Jimmie's way of thinking, just great. You could talk to her about anything. Silly things and important ones. You could even talk to her about the serious side of things that had no serious side--as her mother sometimes put it--and somehow Gram would go along. And she was fun.[1]

At the beginning of the book, Jimmie depends on Gram and keeps her distance from Grandmother Prior.

When Jimmie's parents divorce, her mother takes her and her brother to live with Grandmother Prior, whose home seems a museum. Now, away from her father, Gram, and her friends, Jimmie forces herself to talk with

---

[1]Mary Stolz, Leap Before You Look (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 14.

Grandmother Prior. She discovers they have a common interest in bird-watching, and it is during one of their watches that Jimmie becomes aware of Grandmother Prior's concern for her:

> ". . . 'Have you changed, or have I?'
> Mrs. Prior did not pretend not to understand. She debated a moment. 'Both of us, I daresay. We've tried to understand each other, and it's to our credit.'
> 'But it's working. That's the part I didn't expect. I knew we'd <u>try</u>.'
> 'Nor did I. Expect it. I'd hoped, of course.'
> 'Were you afraid to have us here? Your beautiful house, your things--'
> 'I wanted you.'
> 'I see. You've always seemed satisfied, the other way.'
> 'I was very lonely.'
> 'Oh.'"[1]

Because Grandmother Prior is blunt and honest, Jimmie learns to accept her as a worthy example, thus bringing about one of the most important relationships in Jimmie's life.

A young adult reading <u>Leap Before You Look</u> encounters a myriad of family problems--lack of communication, divorce, moving from one home to another, and many more. But most important, the reader becomes acquainted with two typical, though somewhat stereotyped, elderly adults.

---

[1]Ibid., p. 229.

Three more novels depicting satisfying relationships with grandparents are Summer of My German Soldier, Year of the Cafeteria, and Child of the Owl.

In Bette Greene's Summer of My German Soldier, Patty, a young Jewish girl, harbors an escaped German prisoner of war. When her parents and the town turn against her, her grandparents take her home and give her the support and understanding she needs. This book is especially exemplary for the purposes of picturing a young adult's relationship with the elderly. Not only does it have the girl's grandparents, but it has her black maid, Ruth, who loses her job trying to help Patty.

In Year of the Cafeteria by Mary Alexander Walker, a young girl moves from a country town in Louisiana to the California coast. Azure's adjustments to new surroundings, a new school, and new friends are made easier because of her grandmother, who cooks in the school cafeteria and is highly respected in the town.

In many other cultures of the world, old age is not treated as a social problem. The elderly are revered for their wisdom and experience; their position in the family and community is respected. In Child of the Owl by Laurence Yep, the teenage reader will encounter such a philosophy. Twelve year old Casey, a Chinese-American,

knows nothing of her heritage until she is sent to live with her grandmother in San Francisco's Chinatown. Neither poverty nor her problems with Casey's father diminish her stabilizing influence on her granddaughter.

Most of the books previously discussed have the city, an influence in the characters' lives, as the setting. The last novel, The Whys and Wherefores of Littabelle Lee, by Vera and Bill Cleaver, is set in the harsh mountains of the Ozarks. Littabelle, now sixteen years old, has been reared by her Aunt Sorrow and her grandparents, Maw Maw and Paw Paw.

Maw Maw and Paw Paw are typical hill people, stoic and independent. Their poverty is made easier by their acceptance of fate. They live by an unwritten code of tradition and traditional roles. Aunt Sorrow is an herb doctor and has never married because she feels her parents need her. Years earlier her brothers and sisters escaped the farm to live in the city, caring little about the pathetic lives of their relatives. Littabelle never had cause to question her circumstances; she respected her grandparents and Aunt Sorrow, but just tolerated her aunts and uncle.

In this novel many problems cause Littabelle to grow up quickly. During a storm, lightning strikes the

old house, burning it to the ground and spoiling the store of food. They resort to living in the barn. Then, Littabelle is suddenly faced with the tremendous responsibility of caring for her grandparents. Aunt Sorrow sustains a head injury in an accident, and thereafter believes she has been cheated of her life because she never married. At this point she deserts her family to live with a hermit. To survive, Littabelle begins herb doctoring. By accident she starts teaching school, but her salary does not cover their needs.

Realizing that her relatives will not help her, Littabelle turns to the law. She asks Judge Marriage about laws regarding parents and getting support from their children:

> . . . yet when I persisted in telling him of my mission and he began to listen, an old, dying bonfire in him was kindled. My predicament seemed to strengthen him. You might have thought I had invented it for the sole purpose of bringing it to him to solve, the way he took hold of it . . .
>
> 'I never heard of any law that compels children to care for their aged parents.'
>
> 'You mean there isn't one? But that is not right. When we first started this talk you said there was a law that made parents care for their children. Now why is there not a law to cover the ground in the other direction?'[1]

---

[1]Vera and Bill Cleaver, The Whys and Wherefores of Littabelle Lee (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 120-121.

Littabelle eventually wins support for her grandparents after a court battle. Having felt the older adults had failed her, she ruthlessly rejects her role in the family unit, much to their consternation:

> To describe Maw and Paw's reactions to what I had done to my aunts and uncle, . . . They were scandalized. They considered themselves to have been placed in public disgrace and humiliation and never mind my arguings for the necessity of the matter. . . . For a while there was all billy-hell to pay.[1]

In order to survive, Littabelle continues to be independent, assertive. She takes up a vocation, working for pay and develops a set of values particular to her. Hers is a harsh way, but it is equal to the task of defining her role.

Collectively, these novels realistically depict various encounters between the elderly and the young adult. Because of their experiences, the teenagers are more capable, responsible individuals. The elderly people in the novels serve as catalysts or inspirations for the teenager who is trying to surmount and satisfy tasks of maturity.[2]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 151.

[2]Richard Abrahamson, "The Elderly as a Significant Adult in Adolescent Literature," Arizona English Bulletin (April 1976): 183.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Realism attempts to typify a teenager's world. It has to relate to his social and personal needs to be meaningful. Characteristics we want him to accept or reject are an integral part of the purpose of realism. Thus:

> We need to provide opportunities for children to know old people. Through the pattern and substance of their lives they have contributions to make to children . . .[1]

Librarians must select realistic fiction on the basis of quality and truth. In selecting the novels it is necessary to be aware of the accurate representation of the elderly in order to counteract discrimination and stereotyping of them.

The novels used in this paper examine how a teenager in search of his identity will turn to an elderly adult for friendship and direction if other adults in his life are unsatisfactory. The result of

---

[1]Mae Benne, "Leavening for the Youth Culture," Pacific Northwest Library Association 4 (October 1976): 7.

this unlikely relationship is that the teenager has an opportunity to utilize a heretofore ignored resource of wisdom and experience, and he has the opportunity to examine the last stage of living, its advantages as well as disadvantages. That a teenager develops a philosophy toward aging is just one more benefit of such a relationship. Novels providing vicarious experiences in successfully coping with problems are definitely needed for teenagers today.

Literature plays an important role in shaping young adult behavior and in introducing them to the norms, roles, and values of society. In today's nuclear family, teenagers sometimes have very little opportunity to be well acquainted with older individuals. By depicting an elderly person's values and philosophies, these realistic novels can enhance a young adult's personal development and give him a new awareness, an interest or empathy for another human being.

APPENDIX

The following novels depict relationships between adolescents and elderly adults similar to those discussed in the text of this paper.

Aaron, Chester. Better Than Laughter. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1972 (6-9).

Armstrong, William. Sour Land. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971 (7+).

Barnwell, Robinson. Shadow on the Water. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1967 (6-8).

Beckman, Gunnel. Mia Alone. New York: The Viking Press, 1975 (7-10).

Berri, Claude. The Two of Us. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1968 (6-9).

Colman, Hila. The Amazing Miss Laura. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1976 (7+).

Corcoran, Barbara. The Faraway Island. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1977 (6-9).

Howard, Moses. The Ostrich Chase. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1974 (6-9).

Hunter, Kristin. The Survivors. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975 (7+).

Jones, Weyman. Edge of Two Worlds. New York: The Dial Press, 1968 (6-8).

Lingard, Joan. The Clearance. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1974 (7+).

Rabin, Gil. Changes. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973 (6-9).

Taylor, Theodore. The Cay. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969 (6-9).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamson, Richard. "The Elderly as a Significant Adult in Adolescent Literature." Arizona English Bulletin (April 1976): 183-189.

Benne, Mae. "Leavening for the Youth Culture." Pacific Northwest Library Association 4 (October 1976): 4-8.

Bonham, Frank. Hey, Big Spender!. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1972.

Carlsen, G. Robert. Books and the Teen-Age Reader. Rev. and updtd. ed. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967; Bantam Books, 1971.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. The Whys and Wherefores of Littabelle Lee. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Donovan, John. Remove Protective Coating a Little at a Time. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973.

Greene, Bette. Summer of My German Soldier. New York: The Dial Press, 1973.

Hall, Lynn. The Siege of Silent Henry. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1972.

Havighurst, Robert J. Developmental Tasks and Education. 3rd ed. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972.

Mazer, Norma Fox. A Figure of Speech. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973.

Rawls, Wilson. Summer of the Monkeys. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976.

Stolz, Mary. Leap Before You Look. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972.

Walker, Mary Alexander. Year of the Cafeteria. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1971.

Wersba, Barbara. The Dream Watcher. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

Yep, Laurence. Child of the Owl. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977.

Zindel, Paul. The Pigman. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968.